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STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM  
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA  
HQ USAF FOR XXXX  
DA WASHDC FOR SASA  
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA  
USCINCENT MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR  
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD  
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO FOR ICD  
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL  
PARIS ALSO FOR POL  
ROME FOR MFO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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- [1](#)1. Mideast
- [1](#)2. Israel-Taiwan Relations

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Key stories in the media:  
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The Jerusalem Post reported that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice outraged Israeli politicians from across the political spectrum on Tuesday when she praised PM Sharon in an interview with CNN's Wolf Blitzer. The newspaper wrote that the politicians accused Rice of unfairly helping Sharon's Kadima party win the March 28 elections. The Jerusalem Post quoted the politicians as saying that Rice has continued an American tradition of interfering in Israeli elections.

Israel Radio reported that Israel will carry out goodwill gestures to the Palestinians ahead of the Christmas holiday.

The Jerusalem Post quoted a senior official in the Prime Minister's Office as saying Wednesday that no final decision has yet been made on whether Israel will allow voting for the January 25 PA legislative elections from East Jerusalem post offices as has been done in the past. The Jerusalem Post reported that the Foreign Ministry's position is that the rules that applied during the 1996 PA presidential elections should apply this time as well. Ha'aretz quoted PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas as saying Wednesday that the PA might have to delay elections in view of Israel's intention to bar East Jerusalem residents from voting.

Leading media reported that in Tel Aviv on Wednesday, Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz met with Egypt's intelligence chief, Omar Suleiman, and asked him to try to calm matters in the Palestinian arena and stop the Qassam rocket fire on Israel. Ha'aretz reported that Mofaz told Suleiman about Syria's role in conveying directives and funding to various organizations in the territories. The two reportedly also discussed bilateral issues. Ha'aretz wrote that Mofaz insinuated that Israel would continue militarily operations against the terrorist infrastructure despite the upcoming PA parliamentary elections. Yediot reported that Suleiman advised Israel not to respond to Qassam attacks.

Leading media reported that on Wednesday, Israel and the UN Development Program (UNDP) signed an agreement for removal of rubble from 21 Jewish settlements destroyed in Israel's summer pullout from Gaza. The media reported that Israel will transfer USD 25 million to the UNDP, which will bring in Palestinian contractors to remove the rubble. The media cited the satisfaction of Israeli officials over the fact that Israel would have spent much more for the rubble's removal if it had done it itself. The Jerusalem Post

quoted Yossi Tzemach, spokesman for the Israeli liaison mission with Gaza, as saying that much of the remains are to be crushed and used in construction projects in Gaza. Leading media quoted Tzemach as saying that UN inspectors carried out an environmental check and found that there were no dangerous materials in the rubble.

The three major Hebrew dailies led with internal arguments in the Likud, Kadima, and the Labor Party.

Ha'aretz and Israel Radio reported that a vote on the Likud's slate, which was to have taken place in the Likud's Central Committee on January 3, has been postponed to January 9, so as to prevent Moshe Feiglin, head of the far-right Jewish Leadership faction in the party, from running for a place on the party's Knesset list. Maariv cited the subsequent anger of the Likud's right wing regarding Likud Chairman Binyamin Netanyahu's leaning to the center.

Yediot (lead story) and other leading media reported that Vice PM Ehud Olmert and Justice Minister Tzipi Livni are vying for the No. 2 slot in Kadima. Yediot quoted sources close to Sharon as saying Wednesday that Olmert has the best chances of taking the spot.

Maariv cited claims by senior Labor Party members that Ben-Gurion University President Avishay Braverman intends to capture the party's chairmanship from Amir Peretz. The newspaper reported that American polls advisor Stanley Greenberg has started working for the Labor Party. Maariv reported that Sharon was unconscious for an hour after having been being anesthetized at the Hadassah Ein Karem Hospital in Jerusalem on Monday and that his authority was not officially transferred.

All media (banner in Hatzofe) reported that Rabbi Mordechai "Motti" Elon of Jerusalem, brother of former tourism minister MK Benny Elon, is considering accepting a proposal to head a joint list consisting of the National Religious Party and the National Union.

Israel Radio reported that this morning, IDF troops killed the head of the PFLP in Nablus and two of his lieutenants. The radio reported that later this morning, an IDF officer and four soldiers were slightly wounded south of Ashkelon by shrapnel from a Qassam rocket. Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for the attack. Another Qassam rocket landed in Ashkelon's industrial zone. The radio reported that the IDF responded with artillery fire.

Yediot reported that in the early 1990s, Israel offered Iran USD 1 billion worth in benefits -- USD 5 billion in frozen Iranian assets in the U.S. and USD 5 billion from an unfinished Israeli-Iranian deal -- in exchange for the release of MIA Ron Arad.

Ha'aretz reported that the Justice Ministry's Police Investigations Department has been investigating a complaint that border policemen tied a Palestinian's hands to a mule last week in the village of Nuaman, east of Bethlehem, and caused the animal to break into a gallop, which ultimately led to the man's death.

The Jerusalem Post reported that Andrew MacDonald, a British citizen from Glasgow and member of the pro-Palestinian International Solidarity Movement, who was arrested a month ago after allegedly assaulting a soldier in Hebron, cannot be deported from Israel despite being considered a security risk. He is currently being held at an Immigration Police detention facility.

Major media reported that Channel 2-TV has delayed airing a story probing a near-crash of a plane of the Israeli airline Israir at John F. Kennedy International Airport, following an Israir demand to suppress the show.

The Jerusalem Post extensively featured an interview with Ambassador Swanee Hunt, who came to Israel, among other purposes, to further the Women Waging Peace program. Hunt is a former U.S. Ambassador to Austria and a major player in the American intervention in the Bosnian war, and since 1997, director of the Women and Public Program at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

Leading media quoted MK Yuval Steinitz (Likud), the chairman of the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, as saying in a meeting with reporters that Mofaz made false presentations to the panel on the "Rafah Agreement" regarding border crossings, subsequently leading the committee astray. Steinitz claimed that the crossings were actually opened without

an agreement.

Ha'aretz and The Jerusalem Post quoted Latin Patriarch Michel Sabbah as saying in his annual pre-Christmas news conference that Hamas will only be strengthened by U.S. opposition to its participation in Palestinian elections.

Leading media reported that on Wednesday, dozens of residents of the Palestinian village of Bil'in, near Ramallah, accompanied by Israeli and international activists, set out to place a mobile home on land adjacent to the settlement of Modi'in Ilit (west of the separation fence).

Maariv quoted Avigdor Lieberman, the head of the right-wing Yisrael Beiteinu party, that he did not rule out the division of Jerusalem.

Yediot reported that on Saturday, the Parliament of Norway's Trondelag County decided to boycott all Israeli products. The newspaper reported that the move likely stems from Norway's perception that Israel oppresses the Palestinians.

The media reported that the 16th Knesset concluded its last session on Wednesday. The media note that Knesset Member Yossi Sarid left political life on Wednesday after 32 years as Knesset member in the Alignment (Labor-Mapam), the Civil Rights Movement, and Yahad-Meretz.

Ha'aretz and The Jerusalem Post cited the results of a Hebrew University survey held in conjunction with the Palestinian Center for Policy and Public Opinion in Ramallah, according to which 50 percent of Israelis polled in mid-December would support talks with Hamas if this was necessary to reach a peace deal.

Hatzofe cited the results of a recent poll conducted by Mada Al-Carmel, a Haifa social research institute, according to which 80 percent of Israeli Arabs support the right of return to Israel of Palestinian refugees, or granting compensation as a minimum solution. The poll found that 42 percent of Israeli Arabs tie the issues of the right of return and compensation, while 29 percent believe that the refugees should be given the choice between return and compensation.

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**I. Mideast:**  
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Summary:  
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Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "Any Israeli intervention in the Palestinian election would be perceived as the occupying side's meddling in the democratic action of the occupied nation."

Senior columnist Haggai Huberman wrote in nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe: "Contrary to all his predecessors ... Ariel Sharon has only been a 'yes man' of the U.S. administration."

Lucy Nusselbeh, Director of Middle East Nonviolence and Democracy, a Jerusalem-based NGO, wrote in Ha'aretz in an article disseminated by the American NGO Search For Common Ground: "Israeli public opinion is one of the keys to peace, and one of the major keys to that public opinion is its perception of Palestinian public opinion."

Columnist Ari Shavit wrote in Ha'aretz: "Israeli citizens have a real choice. Therefore, the decision they make on March 28 will be a binding decision. It will be a decision that will give a clear moral mandate to the big division, which Netanyahu will criticize, Peretz will adopt and Sharon will lead."

Block Quotes:  
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**I. "What Will We Talk to Hamas About?"**

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (December 22): "The Hamas movement's sweeping victory in the elections for the local authorities could be an indicator of what results to expect in the January election for the Palestinian Legislative Council.... The demand made by Israel, the United States and Europe to disarm Hamas is not tactical but strategic, and is preliminary to any change in policy toward the organization. The same goes for the demand that the organization recognize Israel. Israel can do nothing

but leave a door open to negotiations with Hamas, and regret its own continued contribution to weakening Mahmoud Abbas' movement to such an extent that Hamas has become the leading Palestinian movement. At this stage, Israel can do little more than this. Any Israeli intervention in the Palestinian election would be perceived as the occupying side's meddling in the democratic action of the occupied nation."

## II. "Why Do Bush and Condoleezza Want Sharon So Much?"

Senior columnist Haggai Huberman wrote in nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe (December 22): "There's nothing new in U.S. intervention in Israeli election campaigns.... But in all previous cases, the United States' behavior was indirect. [During her recent interview with CNN], U.S. Secretary of State spoke openly, without making use of

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blurred formulas. Ms. Rice addressed Sharon directly ... and candidly heaped countless compliments on him. [In his December 20 article, Ha'aretz columnist Amir] Oren accurately pointed at the 'special relationship' between Bush and Sharon: the Israeli Prime Minister is totally enslaved to the Americans. Contrary to all his predecessors, who knew how to uphold Israeli interests in the disagreements that did or didn't break out between Israel and its big friend overseas, Ariel Sharon has only been a 'yes man' of the U.S. administration."

## III. "Fighting For Peace Means Ending Media-Fed Misperceptions"

Lucy Nussseibeh, Director of Middle East Nonviolence and Democracy, a Jerusalem-based NGO, wrote in Ha'aretz in an article disseminated by the American NGO Search For Common Ground (December 22): "Given the balance of power that so strongly favors Israel, Israeli public opinion is one of the keys to peace, and one of the major keys to that public opinion is its perception of Palestinian public opinion. For the Israeli public to tilt towards peace, it needs to be convinced that there is a genuine and overwhelming desire for peace among the Palestinian public.... If the Israeli public can be encouraged to see not the pain of uprooting the Gaza settlements, but the potential for a more peaceful, less fearful life for themselves with disengagement as a first step, the Palestinian public, as well as the Palestinian leadership, might again feel engaged in a peace process, rather than seeing themselves as victims of a unilateral one.... Palestinian society has been undergoing a transformation over the past few years; there is a groundswell of interest in nonviolence, but how many people, in particular Israelis, know this? The influence of the negative stereotype of Palestinians as violent is one of the major influences on both Israeli and international publics.... The media can and should correct the misperceptions of publics by reporting on the common desires for peace and by assuaging rather than stirring up the level of fear; by giving credibility to the voices that speak out against violence and exploitation of the conflict; by above all, humanizing each side to the other in ways that they both can hear."

## IV. "Finally, Israelis Have a Real Choice"

Columnist Ari Shavit wrote in Ha'aretz (December 22): "On the political-diplomatic front, the conformist uniformity continues to dominate. When no one listens anymore to Yossi Beilin and no one listens anymore to Uzi Landau, the result is an uncritical consensus that could very easily evolve into a dangerous conception. For this reason, Netanyahu is important.... The opposite position that Netanyahu knows how to represent is very much needed today, so that the fateful decisions on partitioning the Land of Israel [i.e. Israel, including the territories] will be made during the coming years in a conscious, intelligent and balanced way.... The placement of [Labor Party Chairman Amir] Peretz and Netanyahu at the head of the two ideological movements challenging Sharon is a blessing. It completes the big bang, balances it and makes it into a real democratic event. Now, when the three different paths for the future of Israel have three different leaders, Israeli citizens have a real choice. Therefore, the decision they make on March 28 will be a binding decision. It will be a decision that will give a clear moral mandate to the big division, which Netanyahu will criticize, Peretz will adopt and Sharon will lead."

## 12. Israel-Taiwan Relations:

Summary:

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Foreign News Editor Adar Primor wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "[Taiwan's] lovers hid her away, deep in the closet. This is the way most of the world's countries behave today toward Taiwan. For all its historic irony, Israel is also participating in this game. It has become a secret lover itself."

Block Quotes:

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"China's Wife, Israel's Concubine"

Foreign News Editor Adar Primor wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (December 22): "Some ... call Taiwan the 'Israel of the Pacific Ocean' -- both of the small countries are vibrant democracies that share common values, are preoccupied with existential-security problems, are exposed to the threat of a giant external enemy, and are dependent on American assistance and protection.... During the decades in which Israel waged an exhausting campaign for international recognition, it learned to suffice with the role of the concubine. Her lovers hid her away, deep in the closet. This is the way most of the world's countries behave today toward Taiwan. For all its historic irony, Israel is also participating in this game. It has become a secret lover itself."

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